



Preston Rural District Council.

Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the Year ended 31st December, 1942.

To the Chairman and Members of the Preston Rural District Council.

GENTLEMEN,

The Ministry of Health, in Circular 2,773, dated the 10th March, 1943, request that the Annual Reports of Medical Officers of Health for the Year 1942, be prepared on similar lines to last year, viz., an Interim Report (which I have designated Part 1), and that arrangements, as in the preceding war years, be made for the careful preservation of all Records, including vital statistics, mortality tables, references to sanitary work carried out, &c., so that, after the termination of hostilities, a comprehensive Report may be prepared covering the whole period of the war, thus assuring continuity of the Council's health records. This latter instruction has been complied with in Part 2 of my Report, which I propose to place in the custody of the Clerk of the Rural District Council.

Interim Report.—Part 1.

Vital Statistics.—In Part 2, referred to above, I have included all my usual Statistical Tables for the District as a whole, and also for the several Townships.

The general death-rate for the Rural District for the year 1942, is slightly higher than the rates of the preceding 3 or 4 years ; the infant mortality for the third successive year shows a decline. This latter rate is now only one-third of the rate of fifty years ago. The Rural District birth-rate for 1942 shows a slightly upward tendency.

Matters arising from or connected with the war.

Government Evacuation Scheme.—No special developments or changes took place during the year in this Area.

Air Raid Precautions.—The position remains the same as last year. Ten First Aid Depôts have been provided in the Rural District, together with two Mobile Units, with the necessary equipment and personnel.

Emergency Medical Service.—A Hospital is available for war casualties and civilians.

Within the scope of my duties as Medical Officer of Health I have co-operated, whenever necessary, with the military and other services.

Infectious Diseases.

No very outstanding occurrence marked 1942, except that notified cases of measles exceeded the previous year by over one hundred cases. Tuberculosis cases were also more numerous. My usual Tables are included in Part 2.

I received a report that a passenger proceeding to this Area from a foreign ship had been in contact with confluent small-pox ; the contact was quarantined for a suitable period.

Hospital Accommodation.—For small-pox the Fylde, Preston and Garstang Joint Hospital, 26 beds, is available, and for other infectious diseases, the Preston, Fulwood and Longridge Hospital, 32 beds.

Diphtheria Immunisation.—In my last year's Report I gave a full description of the Immunisation Scheme operative in the Rural District.

During the year 1942, the number of children immunised was 536. 240 school children and 296 children of pre-school age. The total number of children immunised in the Rural District at the end of 1942 was 3,547.

Diphtheria Anti-toxin.—A supply of diphtheritic anti-toxin is always available, free of Charge, at the establishment of a local chemist.

Scabies.—Cases of scabies coming to my knowledge have not been numerous. The facilities offered by the Lancashire County Council have been used when necessary, and disinfection of houses, &c., has been carried out. A few cases were isolated in hospital.

Tuberculosis and Venereal Diseases.—The Lancashire County Council has excellent schemes for dealing with both these diseases throughout the Administrative County Area.

Disinfection.—Houses, &c., disinfected during the year numbered 115. The steam disinfectors at the Fulwood Institution and at the Isolation Hospital are used for infected bedding, clothing, &c.

Pathological Examinations.—The following examinations were carried out for the Rural District Council at the Department of Pathology at the Preston, &c., Royal Infirmary :—Blood 10; Fæces 22; Milk—for B tuberculosis 136, B coli content 135, others 68; Sputum 14; Swabs—B Diphtheriæ 90, Hæmolytic streptococci 30, others 6; Urine culture, pathogenic organisms 1; Total 512.

Measures for Maternity and Child Welfare, &c.

The services for the welfare of mothers and young children, provided by the County Council, have been maintained and extended. A new Clinic was opened in March, 1942, in the Township of Penwortham.

Midwives.—Seven State Registered Midwives practice in the Rural District—2 County Council midwives and 5 provided by the County Nursing Association.

Lancashire County Nursing Association.—No change has taken place during 1942 as regards the nursing facilities provided by the County Association for this District. Fifteen Nurses serve the several Townships of the Rural Area, and the cases attended during the year were as follows :—Midwifery 90, maternity 79, tuberculosis 4, and general 1,092. The total visits made were 20,298. Details of the work carried out in each Township are given in Part 2.

Sanitary Circumstances of the Area.

By Ministry Order no references can be made to industrial or other important developments, such as extension of water supplies, or sewerage work, or other public utility undertakings.

The normal sanitary activities have been well maintained, and full details of the work carried out are given in Part 2 of my Report to which is attached Mr. Collier's Report, and also the County Council's Summary Form. Brief references are made below to a few of the year's activities in certain directions.

New Houses.—Five new houses were erected in one of the Townships. The housing conditions for a Rural Area are generally good.

Inspections.—First inspections numbered 2,285 and re-inspections and other visits 1,124; notices served 125; nuisances abated 492; sanitary defects dealt with 215; 41 inspections of factories and workshops; 23 Shops Acts inspections, &c.

Water Supply.—Water supplies are obtained from four sources; Preston Corporation, Manchester Corporation, Fylde Water Board, and Fulwood Urban District Council. The quantity and quality continued quite satisfactory.

Sewerage.—Outfall works exist in 5 Parishes; elsewhere a septic tank is provided for each house.

Cleansing.—Seventeen Parishes are scavenged by the Council's own direct labour, but owing to the shortage of men, all the parishes have been put on a fortnightly collection of dry refuse. Disposal of refuse is by means of controlled tipping.

Supervision and Protection of the Food Supply.—There are 670 dairy farms in the District on which approximately 12,000 cows are kept. Periodical and special visits are made, the inspections during 1942 numbered 794. Samples of milk submitted for biological test numbered 228—46 were positive and 182 negative. Bacteriological examinations were carried out in 177 instances, and 353 sediment tests were made. Sixty-six samples of milk were taken in the Rural Area by County Council Officers; 3 were deficient in fat; 26 samples of other food stuffs were reported as genuine. Fifty-one samples of milk supplied to children at school were also examined for the presence of tubercle bacilli; one sample was positive.

Parks, Playing Fields and Open Spaces.—Maintenance of the places has been reduced to a minimum and considerable areas have been let off for either grazing or ploughing.

Salvage.—Over 500 tons of various materials have been salvaged, the cash value of which exceeded £2,000.

In completing this, my 63rd and last Annual Report to the Rural District Council, it may not be inappropriate to refer briefly to the progressive advancement and development of public health administration, and to the reduction of disease due, I think, mainly to the science of preventive medicine.

The general death-rate of the Rural District during my period of office has fallen from 18 to 20 per 1000 of the population to 11 or 12 per 1000, the infant death-rate from 150 per 1000 births to little more than 40, and there has been a striking reduction in the grave toll formerly taken by certain foul infectious diseases, for example, small-pox, typhus fever, enteric fever, &c.—diseases which now have almost disappeared from our midst.

Some of the main features in public health progress during my time of office embrace the following:—the notification and control of infectious diseases, the comprehensive character of anti-tuberculosis work, the provision of adequate hospital accommodation and sanatoria, the institution of medical inspection of school children and the provision of milk and meals for these young people, the investigation and research into the cancer problem, the scheme of artificial immunisation against diphtheria, the anti-venereal measures, the progress of maternity and child welfare schemes, the action taken to deal with the complex problem of maternal mortality, the steps taken for the supervision and protection of the food supply and to ensure a cleaner milk supply, the marked improvement in dwelling houses and their environment, and in matters of general sanitation such as sewerage and treatment of sewage, public scavenging and removal of refuse, pure water supplies, &c.

Whilst undoubtedly much yet remains to be done before an ideal state of the public health is reached, these brief and historical reflections show that the National and Local Health Authorities have, during the last half century, played no unimportant part in uplifting to a marked degree the standard of health and personal comfort of the community at large.

My final words as your Medical Officer of Health, which office I relinquished on the 31st of March, 1943, are an expression of my most sincere and grateful appreciation of the kindness and courtesy extended to me at all times by the Members of the Rural Council, and my cordial thanks to the Officials of the Council for their generous assistance, and in this latter connection I tender my special thanks to Mr. Young, Mr. Collier, Mr. Whitehead and Mr. Hayhurst for the ungrudging help they have always so cheerfully given to me.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

CHARLES J. TRIMBLE,

Medical Officer of Health.

June, 1943.

